



A Superstitious Widow.

He was hurriedly hitching up a lean-looking mule in front of his cabin as I turned in from the road, but the moment he caught sight of me he dropped everything and called out excitedly:

"Stranger, kin yo' spar' about five minits of yo'r time?"

"Yes, after my horse has had a drink," I replied. "Well, then, that's good," he continued heartily. "We want another witness to a marriage ceremony about to take place in the house thar", and I was jest wishin' somebody would come along."

"Is your son or a daughter about to be married?" I queried as he brought a pail of water for the horse.

"No, it's the widdier Jones and me, and we'd bin hitched long ago if she wasn't sich a superstitious critter. She wants plenty o' witnesses, but I reckon I've got 'nuff now. Come right in, stranger, and see the purtiest widdier in Arkansas."

I went in and was introduced to the minister, a couple of neighbors and the "widdier"—a sharp-featured, slatternly-looking woman about fifty years old—but after giving me a nod she turned to the old man and asked:

"How many witnesses hev we got now, Jim?"

"Three," he replied, "and if yo'r ready let's purceed with the hitchin'."

"Jim Henderson," she continued, as she stiffly settled back and folded her arms, "when my fust, second, third and fourth husbands all died within two years arter marryin' me I felt a superstishun that it was all becase we didn't hev witnesses 'nuff at our marriages, and it's not goin' to happen agin. You git right out and git some more witnesses or I'll put on my bonnet and git home!"

The old man heaved a couple of heavy sighs, cast several appealing glances at the determined looking widow, and then slowly shambled out doors, and a few minutes later we heard him drive out of the yard. About half an hour later he returned with a crowd of about a dozen people, and as they marched in on us he exultantly exclaimed:

"Found 'em up to Peck's house a-visitin', and brought 'em all along so thar' wouldn't be any more hitches to this hitchin'! Ar' yo' ready, widdier?"

"How many witnesses hev we got now?" she asked, brightening up a little.

"Fo'teen. Y-vo' don't want any more, do yo'?"

"N-no, I reckon not, but I did sorter hanker fur fifteen. Thar haint jest one more outside, be thar'?"

"No, only Peck's yaller dawg."

"Wall, bring him in, too, Jim—bring the dawg in and let yo'r ole mawl witness it through the window, fur I'm jest superstishus 'nuff to believe I wouldn't lost them four husbands if we'd had plenty o' witnesses."

And when the dog had been kicked into the house, and the mule's head tied in such a way that he was obliged to look in at us, the ceremony began, and after it was all over and I was preparing to leave the old man went outside with me, shook hands and said:

"Stranger, yo've bin mighty good to wait around yere so long, and I'm much obleeged to yo'. I was goin' to let yo' kiss the bride fur yo'r trouble, but if I had the rest o' the fellers would have come in on it, too, and durned if I haint jest a leetle superstishus on that pint myself—durned if I haint."

Something to Work on.

CHIEF OF POLICE—Have you made any discovery in regard to the great robbery?

STAR DETECTIVE—There is a slight clew.

CHIEF—Will it lead to the apprehension of the robber?

DETECTIVE—Well, you may depend on me to do my best.

CHIEF—What is the clew?

DETECTIVE—The robber left his photograph with his name and address written on the back.

The Roe of the Shad.

I've read of Ambrosia, the beathen girl's boast, I've read of the piglet Charles Lamb loved to roast, I've tasted the terrapin stewed in the wine, And the beef of John Bull, and admit it was fine; But there's not, never was, never will be, begad! Anything in this world like the roe of the shad!

The roe of the shad.

Ah, the roe of the shad!

I would leave my best girl for the roe of the shad!

I take up the menu and scan down its page.

Bah! I see nothing there can my longing assuage!

At the capon, the duck, the roast mutton and such I turn up my nose, and I murmur, "Not much!"

Till I spy—and my being with joy is aglow—

"Special to-day," (blessed sentence!) "shad roe!"

The roe of the shad.

Ah, the roe of the shad!

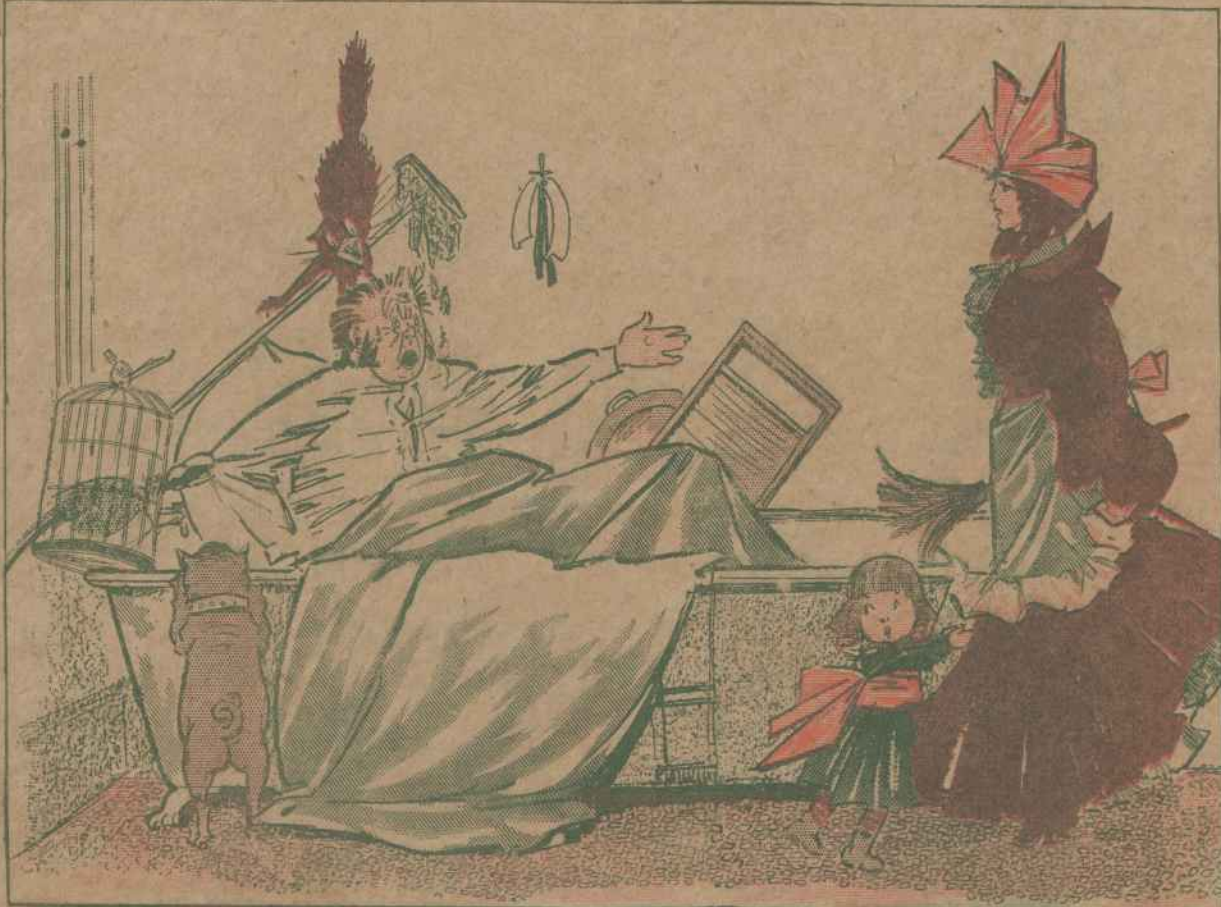
I would give up my job for the roe of the shad!

They bring it in sizzling, all crispy and brown, And I tremble with glee as the boy puts it down.

My mouth's all a-water, my tongue's hanging out, Where shall I commence? Is my faltering doubt,

I keep myself waiting; I want it so bad, But at last I pitch into that roe of the shad!

THE WORM WILL TURN.



MR. SPRINGCLEANING—Look a-here, Clara! I didn't kick when you made me dress on the back stoop this morning, or eat my meals in the cellar, but I'll be danged if I sleep another moment in this bath tub unless you take the parrot out—even if you are house-cleaning!

The roe of the shad.

Ah, the roe of the shad!

I'd steal to get money to buy roe of shad!

The sweet little globules I crunch in my teeth;

I roll them around on my tongue and beneath;

My eyes droop and close in a heavenly dream

As I swallow the glutinous, succulent cream.

Now it's gone; there's no more; I am mournful and sad—

But a memory's left of the roe of the shad!

The roe of the shad.

Ah, the roe of the shad!

I would languish in jail for the roe of the shad!

Ah, glorious shad, hear thy humble slave's vow;

Let me place a bright halo upon thy fair brow!

Lift thy head from the waves of the stream while

he sings—

May thy fins grow apace till they raise thee as wings!

Piscatorial saint, may in heaven be had

A harp and a crown all for thee, shad, O, shad!

The roe of the shad.

Ah, the roe of the shad!

Angelical, beautiful, elegant shad!

A point in His Favor.

DRUGGIST—What leads you to think you will make a good prescription clerk?

APPLICANT—I used to be a bar tender.

The Popular Thing Now.

DEBATE—I'll take this \$25 one. Please charge it on your books.

STOREKEEPER—I'd like to, my friend, but I can't do it. Our trust books are in New Jersey.

A Message from the Dead.

"I received your note, Mr. Burdle," said Hemlock Jones, "and I will do anything in my power to help you if you will give me the facts in detail. Be calm now and go ahead with your story."

"It is not easy to be calm with what appears to be a message from the dead in my hand," replied the cotton broker, "but I will tell you all I know of this mystery. At 7 o'clock yesterday morning a district messenger entered my office and handed me an envelope. I opened it and found this note, which seems to have been written by my wife, who has been dead twenty years. The handwriting is hers or it is an absolutely perfect imitation. At first I was terribly agitated; then it occurred to me that the note might be a forgery and the first step in a blackmailing scheme of some kind. With this thought in my mind I called the messenger, who was just disappearing through the front door, but he did not come back, and when I reached the door he was not in sight. I remember, however, that he was one of those withered, middle-aged men who are sometimes employed as messengers."

"I am not a Spiritualist, and I do not believe in messages from the dead," continued the broker,

"but I must confess that this note unnerved me. I was devoted to my young wife, and her death almost killed me. So when I read these words in her handwriting my soul seemed to go out to another world to meet her. Now, however, I am satisfied that there was some trick."

"Let me read the note," said Hemlock Jones.

It was as follows:

"Darling Jack: I am wretched alone. I long to have you with me. Come to me; come to me; come to me, my beloved."

"Your loving

"IRENE."

There was no date and no address, Hemlock Jones examined the paper and the writing carefully. Then he compared the writing with that of some letters which Mr. Burdle received from his wife before their marriage. Finally he went to his laboratory, saying that he intended to submit the ink with which the note was written to a chemical examination.

In fifteen minutes he returned smiling, and said: "It is just as I thought from the beginning. There is no mystery about this affair."

"No mystery!" cried the broker.

"None whatever," Hemlock Jones continued calmly. "There is no blackmailing scheme. Your wife wrote that note all right."

"Then it is a message from the dead?" exclaimed the broker, trembling with excitement.

"Not a message from the dead either," Hemlock Jones went on as calmly as ever. "Do you not observe that the ink is faded and that paper such as this note is written on is not sold nowadays? I noticed these things at once, and when I made my chemical examination of the ink I was not surprised to find that it was over twenty years old. Mr. Burdle, that note was written by your wife about twenty years ago. It was probably a honeymoon note sent to you while you were at your office for a few hours—and!"

"But—but—why?" interrupted the excited broker.

"And," continued Hemlock Jones, not noticing the interruption, "the note was placed in the hands of a district messenger, who delivered it to you yesterday morning. It was a little slower than the usual service, but nothing very uncommon. I was not at all surprised when you told me the messenger was a rather withered old fellow. One thing more. Can you not remember that your wife said something to you about a missing note during the honeymoon period?"

"Yes, yes, I remember now," cried the broker.

"One day when I came home she mentioned a note which she said she had sent me, and I told her I did not receive it."

"This is the note," said Hemlock Jones. "See how simple the whole thing is?"

